

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

271539Z Oct 05

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004429

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/27/2015

TAGS: PHUM PGOV PINR IZ

SUBJECT: KADHIMIYAH WOMEN'S PRISON: CONDITIONS ADEQUATE, BUT LACKS STRUCTURE

Classified By: POLCOUNS ROBERT S. FORD FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: On October 19, Poloffs visited Kadhimiyah Women's Facility located in Baghdad. According to Director Faisi Mehda, this prison is the only women's facility in Iraq. During the visit, Poloffs discovered a fairly well appointed building that seemed to provide a clean and safe atmosphere for its inmates (although not up to US standards). However, weaknesses of this facility included lax internal discipline and control measures, the haphazard intermingling of inmates, and the lack of inmate activity. Inmate statements indicated a basic lack of understanding of legal status, as well as allegations of police abuse prior to arriving to the prison. End Summary.

OVERALL, FACILITY IS ADEQUATE

2. (C) With a capacity of over 200 inmates, Kadhimiyah's Women's Prison "comfortably" holds 162. Inmates are boarded in large rooms holding more than 20 beds. Though somewhat crowded, these rooms allow for comfortable movement and activity, and appeared to be clean and moderately well appointed. Prison Director Faisi Mehda told Poloffs on October 19 that each inmate is allocated bedding materials, as well as personal hygiene products to meet their needs. All the prisoners that Poloffs met with were well groomed and clean.

3. (SBU) Corrections officers inside the prison are all female, and medical and counseling services are also available to inmates. The Medical Office staff includes 4 nurses, 1 doctor, 1 dentist, and a lab technician. All prisoners are evaluated by the medical staff upon intake. Nearby Kadhimiyah hospital allocates a special section in its facility to deal with more serious medical ailments. The prison facility also provides inmates two family visiting days and the opportunity to meet regularly with one of 6 social workers.

INMATES CO-MINGLED, LAX INTERNAL SECURITY

4. (SBU) The facility houses both convicted felons, as well as pre-trial detainees, and both adults and juveniles. Petty criminals are co-located with more serious offenders, including death row inmates. Although the facility separates adults and juveniles at night, all inmates appear to have the ability to move freely throughout the prison facility and intermingle.

5. (SBU) In many instances during the tour, Poloffs noticed unlocked gates that separate different sections of the facility. Poloffs also noted that many inmates who were seen in one section of the prison would suddenly appear in other "sectioned-off" areas. At one point in the tour, Poloffs were led towards a holding cell to talk with inmates. Upon seeing the approaching visitors, the inmates of that cell scurried to their room, hurriedly closed the gate, arranged the lock, and waited patiently on their beds until the prison Director formally "opened" up the room.

6. (SBU) Regulations regarding inmate clothing do not appear to be uniformly applied. Although required to wear blue, many of the prisoners are allowed to keep (and in some cases actually wear) their street wear, which theoretically could be used to easily slip out of the facility. Despite these security weaknesses, the prison has reportedly not experienced any "prison-breaks."

7. (SBU) Poloffs also met with the 22 juvenile inmates who are being housed in this facility because there is no girls' juvenile detention hall. The youngest is a 12-year old, the eldest 17. Many of the girls indicated that they did not know why they were being detained. One girl said that she was accused of terrorist activity. Another girl mentioned almost nonchalantly that she had been gang-raped by three men, but could not comment on why she was brought

in.

LACK OF STRUCTURED ACTIVITIES

18. (SBU) The Director, who has only been on the job for one month, was hard-pressed to describe a concrete and structured schedule for the women. She said the women sew, make crafts, and in some cases work on reading skills. Approximately 30 percent of the girls indicated that they do not know how to read, but staff said juveniles do not receive any schooling beyond the very basic literacy program. The Director suggested as possible improvements a garden for the children and a kitchen where the inmates could cook. (NOTE: The prison has no kitchen facilities so food is catered. END NOTE.) She also expressed hope that a self-sustaining manufacturing or small business venture could be established in the future.

TELLING COMMENTS: INMATES TELL THEIR STORY

19. (SBU) Although shy at first to reach out to Poloffs, the floodgates 'burst' once Poloffs began to pose questions to the inmates. The majority proclaimed their innocence and expressed concern about their status. Multiple inmates declared they were uncertain as to the reason that they were charged. One woman said she had been acquitted of all criminal charges, but could not leave the facility because there was no family to pay for her transportation back. Others said they had been there for several months (in some cases over a year) without a formal hearing or charge. Amidst the cacophony of inmate complaints, there seemed to be a general theme: an imprecise understanding of where they fell in the legal process and what the next step for them was.

110. (SBU) Another theme was that of police abuse prior to arriving at the facility. The Prison Director initially touched on this theme, which was seconded by some inmates. She noted that a good number of inmates had arrived at the facility with bruises and other evidence of physical abuse. The Director said there had been at least one alleged case of rape. In all cases of alleged abuse, the Director noted that the women's facility took photos and contacted the Ministry of Justice. Several inmates corroborated this, saying torture was used to force a confession.

COMMENT

11. (C) Overall, the inmates at the Kadhimiyyah women's facility seem to be treated well. It was telling that they had no qualms about complaining, even in the Director's presence. The facility is clean, and the inmates are provided with both medical care and social work services. Although daily activities are limited, their morale seemed to be reasonably high during the visit. The lack of adequate security measures marks one of the major differences of this prison from its counterparts in the US, as well as the co-mingling of different categories of prisoners. Despite the lack of good internal security, the facility does not report any instances of serious inmate violations nor breakouts, and appears to function well.

Satterfield